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## **Abstract**

Writings by and about McLuhan trace his interest in the comparative study of media to his literary training at Cambridge in the 1930s which was occupied with the aesthetics of sight and sound and the predominance of representational forms over the content represented. This paper puzzles over the lack of reference -- by McLuhan, his mentors, and his critics -- to an earlier group of British thinkers (from Shaftesbury to Adam Smith) who deliberated over the differences among the arts. Their treatises on how the mind processes visual and auditory information remarkably foreshadow McLuhan's assertion that the media constrain how we think and feel. Present-day debate over the effects of new media technology, as well as current theories of reception, reflect McLuhan's stimulating (though exasperating) insights. His footprints also point to cognitive science and, of course, to globalism.

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## McLuhan: Where Did He Come From, Where Did He Disappear?

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*Abstract:* Writings by and about McLuhan trace his interest in the comparative study of media to his literary training at Cambridge in the 1930s which was occupied with the aesthetics of sight and sound and the predominance of representational forms over the content represented. This paper puzzles over the lack of reference -- by McLuhan, his mentors, and his critics -- to an earlier group of British thinkers (from Shaftesbury to Adam Smith) who deliberated over the differences among the arts. Their treatises on how the mind processes visual and auditory information remarkably foreshadow McLuhan's assertion that the media constrain how we think and feel. Present-day debate over the effects of new media technology, as well as current theories of reception, reflect McLuhan's stimulating (though exasperating) insights. His footprints also point to cognitive science and, of course, to globalism.

*Résumé:* Les écrits de McLuhan et ceux sur lui attribuent son intérêt pour l'étude comparative des médias à sa formation littéraire à Cambridge dans les années trente, formation portant sur l'esthétique du son et de la visuelle, et sur la prédominance de formes représentatives sur le contenu représenté. Cet article s'interroge sur le manque de références -- tant chez McLuhan que chez ses mentors et ses critiques -- à un groupe antérieur de penseurs britanniques (de Shaftesbury à Adam Smith) qui délibérèrent sur les différences parmi les arts. Leurs traités sur comment l'esprit assimile l'information visuelle et auditive présagent de manière remarquable l'assertion de McLuhan que les médias forment nos pensées et nos sentiments. Les débats contemporains sur les effets de nouvelles technologies médiatiques, ainsi que les théories de réception courantes, reflètent les idées stimulantes (quoique exaspérantes) de McLuhan. Sa démarche mène aussi dans la direction des sciences cognitives et, bien sûr, du globalisme.

Preaching from the threshold between the fall of "typographic man" and the rise of "electronic man," a Canadian professor of English named Herbert Marshall McLuhan became the guru of the media age following the publication of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* in 1962 and *Understanding Media* in 1964. Brilliant, erudite, and eccentric, the fame went to his head as he pontificated to industrial chiefs, advised publishers and prime ministers on the future of mankind, and appeared as himself in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*. In books and articles, intellectuals, however disenchanted, continued to ask, "But what if he's right?" (Wolfe, 1968). And his biographer, Philip Marchand (1989), recalls a *New Yorker* cartoon in 1970 in which a young woman, emerging from a cocktail party, asks her escort, "Ashley, are you sure it's not too soon to go around saying 'Whatever happened to Marshall McLuhan?'" (p. 220).

This paper will try to answer these questions from a perspective of some 30 years. But it is not easy, first of all because it is difficult to read McLuhan. He refuses to hold still. He takes what Walter Benjamin calls "tiger leaps" inside the world of scholarship. He invents language of his own, well spiced with contemporary jargon. He contradicts himself, often intentionally. Every assertion is probably wrong. And he changes his stance -- shifting attention from literature to the content of popular culture, and then to the forms in which the content resides; and shifting from the moral outrage of a critical theorist (in *The Mechanical Bride*, 1951) to the ostensibly value-neutral position of a cultural historian.

## Some introductory guidelines

Let us begin by addressing some common assumptions about McLuhan, to each of which our answer is "yes, but." People ask, "If he's wrong on every detail, doesn't that disqualify him? Isn't he just a showman?" to which the answer is "yes, he's hardly a meticulous researcher, but no, his provocations popularized a long-brewing reorientation to the media of art and communication."

People ask, "Didn't he oversell technology?," to which the answer is "yes, but he, himself, disliked technology." "Wasn't he a technological determinist?," they ask, alluding to McLuhan's insensitivity to the harnessing of technology by the powers-that-be and societal definition of its uses and meanings. The answer is "yes, technology dictates to society but some of these very dictates are themselves liberating, freeing man to be more himself."

"Wasn't he in love with television?" The answer is "certainly more than with print." But he loved its form and feared its content, as we will show.

People think he was uninterested in testing his propositions. In fact, he tried but failed (Marchand, 1989). People think that McLuhan was the founder of the media studies that have sprouted everywhere. But the fact is that his name rarely appears among pioneer media theorists and he is held in rather low repute among social scientists who study mass communications. His fame spread, rather, among the humanists and leaders of literary establishments such as George Steiner, Jonathan Miller, Susan Sontag, Frank Kermode, and so forth (Stearn, 1967). But acknowledged or not, he stimulated, maybe revolutionized, our thinking about the social history and sociology of mass communication.

## McLuhan's thesis

McLuhan is an historian of culture who posits that the prime movers of cultural change are communications technologies. He does not tell us how the media displaced each other -- that is, how speech gave way to tom-toms, to alphabets, to scribal writing, to moveable type, to the printing press, cinema, telegraph, radio, television, and computer. But he does argue that each of these technologies successively changed the societies in which they predominated. In this sense, he is like other theorists of single causes, whether the technologies of energy (Wittfogel, 1957) or of production (Marx).

For McLuhan, technologies may be defined as extensions of man's senses and limbs, and thus almost all technologies are associated with communication and transportation, be they bicycles or eyeglasses or the radio.

The difference between McLuhan and other theorists of communications technology, including Harold Innis (1950), is that he is not satisfied to assert that media affect the organization of society, as, say, the automobile affected the urban environment. McLuhan's claim is that the technology (also) works indirectly on society by affecting the ways in which the brain processes information from each new medium, how the mode of processing affects the senses and thus personality, and how personality, in turn, affects social organization. One of his most provocative assertions is that the technologies of alphabetic writing, especially print, trained the brain to process visual information linearly, and such linear thinking -- implying determination, causality, logic, detachment, delayed gratification -- is then applied to the rest of life.<sup>2</sup> In a word, McLuhan is saying that the sequentiality of print socialized perception and thought to favour formal linear argumentation from a single (rather than multidimensional) point of view, thus to produce a personality that was inclined to invent perspectival thinking in art, assembly lines for industrial production, railroad lines for business, and the straight-thinking of science. The age of electronic media allegedly changed all that.

This is what McLuhan means by "the medium is the message." He tells us to pay less attention to the content of a medium than to its technology. The message, he implies, is what the medium tells us about *how* to think, not what to think. At other moments, McLuhan is satisfied that his most famous phrase calls

our attention to the idea that the medium as "figure" changes the "ground" of the environment, as the computer, say, changes office routines, the writing of history, the decentralization of work, and so forth.

While he spells out the effects, in their time, of each of the predominant technologies, his main interest is in the contrast between media of "heart" and media of "mind." In the beginning was orality, the extension of the ear, the medium of heart. Unlike print that extends the eye individualistically, word-of-mouth is sociable, pluralistic, playful, favouring generalist and operational wisdom rather than specialist and classified information. Acoustic man experiences life simultaneously rather than sequentially, and sees the world more cubistically with competing aspects in the same single frame. Word-of-mouth favours communication in time across generations, and hence tradition and religion, whereas print pushes for communication in space, and hence towards the development of nations and empires (McLuhan, 1964).

It follows that the important difference among media, according to McLuhan, is in their openness, or ambiguity, and thus in the extent to which active participation is required from their audiences. This is what McLuhan means by "hot" and "cool." The more intense and unrelenting the stimulus, the less involvement on the part of the audience, he says, classifying print and the disembodied voice of radio as "hot" because of their technological single-mindedness, and speech and television as "cool."<sup>3</sup> True to his technology, McLuhan argued that the television viewer is required to subconsciously connect the dots on his television screen in order to complete the picture, and hence is more involved, more participatory. (This is what led to the joke that McLuhan owned a faulty television set.) The multiple senses addressed by television and its literalness -- thought by most mainstream communications researchers to reduce involvement -- makes television *more* involving for McLuhan, thus to resemble the participatory qualities of speech with its accompanying gestures, intonations, and so forth. Hence, for McLuhan, participatory television is the reintroduction of the culture of orality and a cooling down of the one-dimensional directedness of typographic culture. This is how McLuhan reads Kennedy's 1960 victory over Nixon: the cool Kennedy was compatible with the cool medium, whereas the overheated Nixon -- we know from research -- was thought to have bettered Kennedy among listeners to the hot medium of radio.

The electronic age has extended several of our senses simultaneously, and, through the awareness of ourselves and others that is said to be the product of such multidimensional involvement, we are better able to understand, and assume responsibility for, what is happening in our community, our nation, and our planet. Hence the concept of "global village." McLuhan contrasts the selfishness of typographic culture with the collectivism of electronic culture. It leads him to betray his moral bias, even if he claims to be a value-neutral observer. He wants us to understand that acoustic cultures -- of sound, of heart, of simultaneity and multifaceted perception -- take care of their own, better than the visual cultures which cultivate the self at the expense of the collectivity.

Apart from attention to form, there is also an acknowledgment of content. In his most original use of the term,<sup>4</sup> McLuhan proposes that the "content" of each new medium is its predecessor, that is, that the novel is the content of the cinema, phonograph records are the content of radio, and films are the content of television. By being framed anew in this way, each medium thereby undergoes "aestheticization." Thus, cosmopolitan television aestheticizes the Old West, for example, or a satellite view from the moon aestheticizes planet Earth.<sup>5</sup>

But our purpose is not to demonstrate, yet again, that McLuhan contradicts himself, or that his likes and dislikes are based on prejudice and prior commitment, or that his jazzy dichotomies rest on dimensions that are not independent of each other. Rather, we wish to direct attention, however briefly, to certain academic roots which underlie his concerns, as well as to certain predecessors of whom he appears to be unaware.

## Where did he come from?<sup>6</sup>

Where did McLuhan get these ideas? His critics and biographer agree on several sources, in addition to those he acknowledges himself. First, one should notice his personal history of marginality: He stems from

northwest Canada; had an independent feminist mother and a weak father -- both interested in words and in spirituality; converted to Catholicism in 1937; and brow-beat anybody who would venture to debate his wild insights and proclamations, even while wanting to be liked. He is thought to have benefited from the unusual insights that come from being a multiple outsider.

Intellectually, he was nurtured in two academic traditions, to which he was drawn after he became uneasy about his conventional studies of English literature and the classics. One of these is a complex array of disciplines that can be summed up by the label *aesthetics*; this dates to Cambridge in the late 1930s. Only later, after arriving in Toronto, did he become involved with technological theories, especially via Harold Innis who was a regular participant in McLuhan's weekly seminar (Carey, 1967). Innis was a Chicago-trained economist who had studied aspects of the political economy of Canada, such as the trade in furs and fish (Creighton, 1981), and became interested in the role of "media of space" and "media of time" in shaping ancient and modern nations and empires. In his classic works on this subject (Innis, 1950, 1951), he relates the portability of media such as papyrus and writing to the extension of centralized spatial control by Rome and, later, Egypt, and the erection of monuments and writing-on-stone oriented cultures to religion and communication across generations.

But it was the experience of Cambridge that proved definitive for McLuhan (Marchand, 1989). His two main mentors, I. A. Richards and F. R. Leavis, were in the process of overthrowing the traditional study of literature, and infected McLuhan with their cognitive, aesthetic, and sociologically oriented programs. The New Criticism led by Richards sought to shift the focus of study away from the meaning and authorial intent of the text to its rhetorical powers, thus to shift attention away from "sight" and towards "sound," in the McLuhan sense. In Richards' view, the critic's job is to analyze how a poem is able to achieve its effects. He advised paying close attention to the working of actual words in context, not to their exact definitions and certainly not to vague adventures of the soul.

This thrust led to a renewed interest in perception and in the ways in which mental processing intersected with the powers of the text. The Cambridge group also turned to other arts, including music, moving away from the semantic in the direction of the syntactic -- that is, away from content and towards structure and form. McLuhan became interested in Edgar Allen Poe for this reason, and in other modern poets, such as Eliot and Joyce, who were adding dimensionality -- that is, more, more, more "sound" -- to their poetry. At the same time, new emphasis was put on the role of the reader. Leavis -- the other of McLuhan's primary teachers -- said that to understand a poem, one had to reconstruct the poem in one's own mind. T. S. Eliot said that the chief use of meaning in a poem is to distract the reader so that the poem can work. In the same spirit, years later, McLuhan (1964) would say that content is the piece of meat the burglars give the watchdog so that the medium can do its work, forever aware of the manipulative powers of both media and messages.<sup>7</sup>

Literature thus intersected with developments in aesthetics. For McLuhan, F. R. Leavis was more influential than Richards because he was interested not only in how a poem affects but in the functions of poetry as well (Miller, 1971). Meanwhile, Q. D. Leavis was conducting empirical research on the interaction of the writer and the reading public. The arts have a qualitative impact, a kind of immediacy, was the thrust of this argument. Differing from Richards, this approach emphasized the integrative "wholeness" of the artistic message, not its component parts. As a result, McLuhan -- following Hopkins, Yeats, and Eliot -- oriented himself to the distinction between auditory and visual perceptual types. In his work on the trivium, McLuhan realized that dialectica (critical reason) could be applied to the visual, while rhetorica (persuasion) and especially grammatica (power of words) were associated with the media of sound; he also realized that the shifting balance among these three could be used to characterize different epochs (Marchand, 1989). His thesis on Thomas Nashe applied these tools of analysis and, upon his return to Canada, he defied convention by applying Leavis' approach to the study of how popular culture works (to teach students, he said, how to liberate themselves from its clutches). This was an early example of what is now called media literacy.<sup>8</sup>

McLuhan had a strong interest in art. He was fascinated by the idea of perspective and its links to linearity,

as has already been noted. He was fascinated by medieval art which gave multiple views of a given object side by side, and noted the parallel to cubism, which did the same thing. He saw modern art as an important antagonist to the stringencies of visual culture.

These developments in literature and aesthetics coincided at Cambridge with work in neurology, as has been noted, in the psychology of perception, and in anthropology. Richards was explicitly interested in the ways in which the "nervous system processes and assimilates the information provided for it by the imaginative writers" (Miller, 1971, p. 29). This anticipates McLuhan's later interest in the division of labour between the hemispheres of the brain and his posthumous essay on the typographical European, subtitled "The 'Western' Hemisphere" (McLuhan, 1978). Later, McLuhan would find special interest in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that languages -- like the media -- "shape the way we experience the world" (Marchand, 1989, p. 117). (Note that this falls short of the linguistic turn in philosophy which led beyond discussions of the age-old boundaries between logic and rhetoric, in an attempt to redraw the entire map of reason.)

Given his interest in aesthetics, it is surprising how little reference is made to the vast literature on the role of perception and mental processing of the arts that dates back to the eighteenth century. The "media literacy" of today came to the fore 200 years ago in a multitude of treatises that dealt with the differences among artistic media, as their dictates, boundaries, and uniquenesses interact with the senses which they engage and the types of mental processing which they trigger. Even more surprising than McLuhan's silence about these sources is the fact that they are apparently unremembered by the Cambridge community of the 1930s if one is to judge from literary critics and interlocutors of McLuhan. It is uncanny that these arguments and interdisciplinary explorations are almost a photocopy of arguments and explorations that enlisted a coterie of British men of letters, philosophizing about the arts almost two centuries earlier. In other words, the cognitive and aesthetic propositions to which McLuhan alludes, rightly or wrongly, can be traced back to eighteenth-century preoccupations with how the mind processes visual and auditory information. Like McLuhan and his Cambridge mentors, these writers -- from Shaftesbury to Adam Smith -- linked aesthetic concerns with moral philosophy and were deeply concerned, moreover, with related developments, especially in theories of language from Warburton and Condillac until Rousseau. That they are "unremembered" reminds us that science does not develop in a simple linear fashion; only when a paradigm takes centre-stage do we look back to discover its precursors (Kuhn, 1970).

Briefly, the problem of perception came to the fore, together with other theories of man and society, as Europe became less self-centred and new worlds loomed on its horizon. Cultural variance gave rise to new universals concerning men while social universals gave rise to comparative studies of human organization, culture, language, and ultimately to the embryonic social sciences. This was a moment in which empirical observation and inductive generalization displaced philosophical postulates, in which hypotheses about constructivist world-making vied with determinism, and in which Vico is the best-known name (see Vico, 1963).<sup>9</sup>

The interest in perception led to a search for evidence of how the mind works, just as it had done in Richards' Cambridge, and how the senses -- especially seeing and hearing -- are employed. The search led to the arts as a functional anticipation of the neuro-psychological laboratory, on the (brilliant) assumption that artistic problem-solving may reveal how the mind works. This was the point at which mimetic theories of artistic production were displaced by constructionist theories, and the arts were thought to be better perceived as different forms of world-making, given the different senses which they employ. In the process, the status of music, the art of the ear, changed from the art least able to imitate nature to the art that could, in effect, create coherent form without content, syntactic structures without semantic messages, effects without labels. That the structure of music "makes sense but not meaning" -- that is, that "musical structure itself is the message" -- became the envy of the other arts and paved the way towards abstract art.

In other words, the arts -- seen as extensions of eye and ear -- were no longer thought to be inferior to science but were conceived as different ways of knowing, and thus aesthetics became a branch of



philosophy. Fascinating treatises were written about the differences among the arts and their different modes of symbolization. Mimesis was banished, along with the idea that each of the arts does the same thing, more or less, but by different means. Music, for example, was now seen as giving more direct access to experience than literature, anticipating Schopenhauer's view of music's primordially (see Schopenhauer, 1950). Emphasis shifted to the ways in which the different arts selected content appropriate to their abilities and limits. Lessing (1957) is only the best known of a series of essayists who show how the media -- whether painting, music, or poetry -- set limits to the message.

It is a real surprise that McLuhan's far-reaching and self-serving literature search did not rediscover these fairly widespread deliberations on the differences among the arts, their modes of perception and representation, and their syntactic and semantic implications. He seems well versed in the debates over "making" versus "matching" in the Greeks and in Gombrich (1980) (in McLuhan, 1962, for example), but has missed out on a century of thinking which anticipates his own. Had he positioned himself on these shoulders, he would have been better situated to defend his thesis that cultures are based on choices, themselves cognitively constrained, whose consequences, however, are predetermined. It is fair to say that his emphasis on the *how* of thinking, rather than the *what*, rests on aesthetic theory concerning the limits of artistic media, on the one hand, and some theoretical assumptions concerning the nature of perception and cognition, on the other.

## Why was he famous?

McLuhan was a vituperative provocateur, given to aphorisms and punning. For the 20 years or so since Cambridge, he was an *enfant terrible* in the several places he taught, and his publications attracted attention in respectable journals of literature and language. Portents of his fame came from his critical readings of popular culture -- especially his tirades against the mechanization of man, henpecked by machines and women -- and the analysis of the symbolic environment of advertising that culminated in *The Mechanical Bride* in 1951. He was discovered more widely through his contributions to the *Swanee Review* extolling the myth of the patrician South and its oral culture, set against the overheated industrialism of the typographic North. His agrarian romanticism led him to preach the virtues of community, to decry escapism, and to lean a little towards Franco fascism. He became even better known in the iconoclastic *Explorations in Communication*, a journal he edited with his creative seminar group, which was given a big boost by the Ford Foundation in 1952. McLuhan's groupies and converts, meanwhile, did a lot of public relations for their guru (Marchand, 1989).<sup>10</sup>

By the late 1950s, television was widely diffusing, and McLuhan began to take note of the dawning of a new age that would replace the era of the printed word and lead to a renaissance of cool acoustic space. Abandoning his critique of content, he switched to extolling the great potential of the new medium and its liberating and participatory qualities. This is the real beginning of his fame. He offered to all a hopeful future. He saw the evils of mechanization fading away, and with it the rise of globalism and the decline of the overheated nation-state. He believed that people would once again become aware of the world around them, thanks to the multiple perspectives that arise from shared and ubiquitous experience and simultaneous viewing by different kinds of people, and by the multiple senses that the medium requires for its decoding. In short, he proposed that we were on the verge of a world community connected by electric simultaneity, in which all stood to be empowered. He called it the Global Village.

This doctrine was comfortable to people on both sides of the set: It made viewers feel less guilty over the time spent watching television. Likewise, it deflected some of the criticism directed against the owners and producers of the mass media, who were relieved of responsibility for the possible effects of content. And, of course, there were his aphoristic pronouncements which attracted a lot of amused attention and the reaction, "What if he's right?"

For academics, he made communication the queen of the sciences, shifting attention away from whether this jingle is more effective than that jingle, to the role of media as technologies that affect cognition, personality, and social organization. It is a lot more satisfying to know that one's discipline has the best



explanation for the Protestant Reformation or the rise of science, or of Hitler, than whether smart advertising campaigns really decide the elections.

His message, in short, was a proposal not simply for understanding media, but for understanding cultural history and social change as a function of media predominance, and a lot of people were attracted to the all-but-unprovable thesis. And some still are (e.g., Meyrowitz, 1996). Moreover, now relinquishing concern over the manipulative potential of the media, his was a message of hope about a benign future, addressed to a world about to explode in the Cold War, Vietnam, the Kennedy assassination, the outbreak in the black ghettos, and the retreat of the flower children.

## Where has he gone?

Then he vanished. But did he?

First of all, he deserves credit for inspiring Eisenstein's (1979) rigorous study of the effect of the printing press and Ong's (1982) early work on the typographical teaching of Ramus. Both writers acknowledge their debt, even while distancing themselves -- Eisenstein especially -- from McLuhan's outrageous methodology.

Secondly, McLuhan's ghost can be found in cognitive studies. Nobody there takes notice, of course, but the fact is that McLuhan popularized the links among neurology, perception, the arts, and the media. In short, he did good public relations for the mind's new science, in spite of his failure to understand its subtlety and its rigour.

Then there is globalism. The satellite and the Internet have now virtually aestheticized television, as an outdated form, and the whole world is again talking about the Global Village. Indeed, applying technological determinism to the present moment, one cannot but conclude that the new media have outmoded the nation-state and that the world now consists of diasporas, on the one hand, and multinational corporations, on the other (Katz, 1996).

McLuhanism is evident in cultural studies as well. He was one of the first to make the study of popular culture academically legitimate (Schudson, 1987). On the other hand, he was naïve about power and, from this aspect, stands outside of cultural studies. But from the point of view of reception research, he stands well inside the tradition. When he was asked the perennial Canadian question, "What will happen to Canadian content on television if popular culture overwhelms us from across the border?," McLuhan replied, "If Canadians are viewing, that's Canadian content." His concern with involvement and participation are the essence of reception theory not only in communications research but in the study of literature as well (Radway, 1986).

McLuhan's footprints may also be traced to two further contemporary factions -- except that these are mutually contradictory, just as he would have liked. One is the communitarian movement (Etzioni, 1995), which gives expression to McLuhan's yearning for home, hearth, sociability, and simplicity (Ferguson, 1970), in which oral communication and its technological mutations predominate. This is McLuhan's "ideal speech situation," without Habermasian rationality and, one should add, without McLuhan's pontifications.

The competing paradigm is postmodernism, which posits mutually alienated cultural communities, each with its own modes of thought and mutually exclusive aesthetic styles, living side by side in a world in which reality itself is called into question by the competing images which are said to represent it.

McLuhan would have liked being on both of these aircraft as they crash in virtual reality.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This paper was prepared for a symposium in honour of Professor Yehoshua Arieli, held at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute on June 25, 1996. It was revised for presentation at a session dedicated to Innis and McLuhan, organized by Dr. Marjorie Ferguson, at the annual

meeting of the International Communication Association, Montreal, QC, May 1997. The present version is further expanded, thanks to the fellowship and hospitality of the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center.

- 2 Earlier, Riesman, Denney, & Glazer (1950) proposed a connection between types of personality (tradition-directed, inner-directed, other-directed) and the succession of media that characterize American epochs. Jonathan Miller praises McLuhan on this point: "He has done something which very few have done publicly before. That is: to focus attention on the devices through which we obtain knowledge. These aspects have largely been ignored in the past, or at least have been a province of philosophers or else of neuro-physiologists, and I think for the first time what McLuhan has done is to bring the nervous system right into the center of the discussion of ordinary communications and of human knowledge in general" (in Stearn, 1967, p. 235). We argue that McLuhan should have known more about the philosophers to whom Miller alludes.
- 3 The dichotomies eye /ear, heart /mind, oral / literate, hot /cool, and involved /uninvolved obviously overlap. For example, one cannot simply subdivide eye and ear into hot and cool, nor does McLuhan take the trouble to help us through these difficulties. In the case of hot /cool, however, he does imply that the terms are relative to any particular comparison of two media, suggesting that hot /cool is not a dichotomy but a scale of "hotter than."
- 4 Other uses of "content" include the accepted reference to text, program, and genre, but also to personality and the aphorism that "the reader is the content of the poem" (Marchand, 1989, p. 34; see also p. 255).
- 5 Classically, the concept "aesthetization" implies distantiating of an object, which would introduce further confusion if, for example, a hotter medium became the content of a cooler one. This problem probably did not occupy McLuhan but it is perfectly reasonable to ask how the delivery of the content of one medium via the technology of another affects the "message" of one or the other, or both. The obvious experiment is to compare the experience of the "same" film screened on a movie projector and on television.
- 6 We rely heavily here on the fascinating biography of McLuhan by Marchand (1989). The Gordon (1997) biography was published after submission of this paper and we have not been able to consult it.
- 7 His classroom teaching and writings on popular culture (e.g., McLuhan, 1951) were innovative efforts to expose the working of popular culture.
- 8 The discussion in the paragraphs that follow is documented in Katz & Hachohen (1998).
- 9 The mind, according to Vico (1963), operates symbolically, transforming all sensations into meanings, forever seeking coherence. The human mind does not change; what changes are the cultural artifacts which are the creation of human consciousness. The only basis for a science of culture and a metaphysics of mind are, therefore, historical investigations of the different encounters of human consciousness as they occurred at different times and situations. That there can be a "science of mind which is the history of its development ... that this process is traceable through the evolution of symbols -- words, gestures, pictures, sounds, and their altering patterns and uses," is the boldest contribution of Vico's anthropological historicism, according to Isaiah Berlin (1979, p. 113).
- 10 In addition to the artists and writers who promoted him, there is a real, albeit small, "genius-scouting" public relations firm that adopted him and staged events in his behalf. One of the duo who ran the campaign is Howard Gossage whose essay on his find is reprinted as the lead article in Stearn (1967). For the role of promoters in securing the reputation of artists, see Lang & Lang (1990).

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